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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/17/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAO](#) [UN](#) [GA](#) [CU](#)
SUBJECT: THE GAMBIA: ANTI-U.S. PROPAGANDA EFFORT BY CUBAN
EMBASSY

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOSEPH STAFFORD, REASON 1.4 (B AND D)

SUMMARY

1. (C) Embassy protested effort by Cuban Embassy to enlist Gambian public support for an anti-USG "declaration," and senior Foreign Ministry official undertook to tell the Cubans to cease and desist. The GOTG is far from being a mouthpiece for the Cuban regime, although it is an important donor here in the health field. END SUMMARY.

CUBAN EMBASSY'S PR EFFORT

2. (U) Recent days have witnessed signs of a public relations campaign here by the Cuban Government. On March 16, the local press featured a report, clearly supplied by the Cuban Embassy, that "at least 400 intellectuals and other personalities around the world have called on the United States to close its detention centers and cease its deliberate violations of human dignity in the name of the so-called war against terrorism." The report, accompanied by a photo of Cuban Ambassador to The Gambia Carlos Salsamendi, concluded with an announcement that anyone wishing to sign on to the foregoing "declaration" should contact the Cuban Embassy.

3. (C) Following appearance of the press report, Embassy issued a diplomatic note to protest the announcement, noting that it amounted to an effort by the Cuban Government to mobilize Gambian public opinion for anti-USG propaganda purposes and requesting the GOTG to ensure that the Cuban effort ceased. In the Foreign Minister's absence, Ambassador also contacted the Foreign Ministry's number-two, Permanent Secretary William Joof, emphasizing that the Cuban Embassy's

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initiative was an unacceptable attempt by another state to enlist Gambian public support for an anti-U.S. propaganda campaign. In response, Joof said he took our point and undertook to tell the Cuban Ambassador to cease and desist.

MESSAGE FROM CASTRO

4. (U) On March 17, the Gambian media reported a message from Castro to Gambian President Yahya Jammeh conveying Castro's thanks for "standing resolutely behind Cuba at the United Nations in the bid to end the blockade imposed on the Cuban people." The media did not elaborate on the message, which presumably was an allusion to past UN debates on the issue.

COMMENT

¶5. (C) With its generally moderate, pro-Western outlook, the GOTG is far from being a mouthpiece for Havana. At the same time, the occasional, favorable references to Cuba in official pronouncements and in the media are not surprising, as Cuba is among the more prominent bilateral donors here. Its assistance is largely confined to the health field; the 250 or so Cuban physicians in The Gambia serve as the backbone of the country's medical system.

¶6. (U) COMMENT CONTINUED: On the detention issue, Embassy will continue to look for opportunities to use relevant guidance from the Department in our public diplomacy activities here. END COMMENT.

STAFFORD